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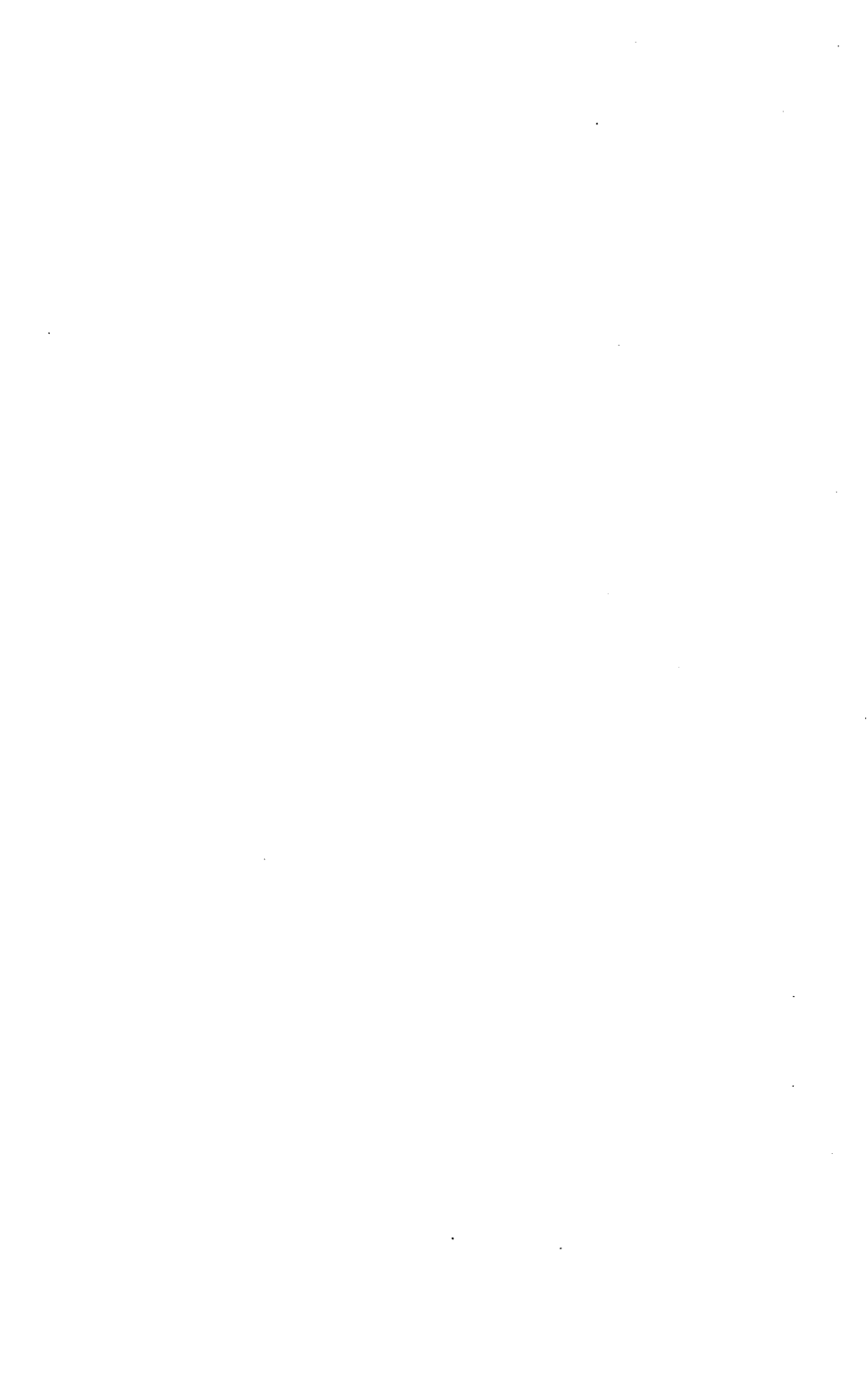
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THE

RIGHTEOUS STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS

OF THE REPUBLIC:

A THANKSGIVING SERMON,

Delivered in Trinity Church, Washington, Thursday, November 24, 1859,

BY REV. C. M. BUTLER, D. D.

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH.

WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY HENRY POLKINHORN.

1859.

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TO
YASSEL GOACHO

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CORRESPONDENCE.

WASHINGTON, *November 25, 1859.*

DEAR SIR :—In the present aspect of affairs in this country we deem it of the first importance that the true position and mission of the Church shall be understood and felt; that she should speak plainly and boldly, not upon political subjects, but upon matters wholly affecting the essential interests of Society and the State.

We were deeply impressed with the great truths presented in your discourse on Thanksgiving day, and are persuaded its wider dissemination will tend greatly to enlighten the public mind, to assuage the bitterness of excitement with which it is filled, and to produce a spirit of harmony and good will; and moved as well by our own appreciation of it, as also at the earnest solicitation of many of those who heard it, we respectfully ask a copy of it for publication.

We are, very truly and faithfully, yours,

D. W. MIDDLETON,
L. D. GALE,
Wardens.

J. M. BRODHEAD,
E. L. CHILDS,
JOS. F. LEWIS,
C. B. MAURY,

JOS. H. BRADLEY,
F. COYLE,
W. B. TODD,
GEORGE PARKER,
Vestry of Trinity Parish.

Rev. C. M. BUTLER, D. D.

WASHINGTON, *November 26, 1859.*

To the Wardens and Vestry of Trinity Church,

DEAR BRETHREN :—I fear that your partiality over-rates the value of the sermon which you request for publication, and the influence which it is calculated to exert on the public mind. If, however, it may be as a drop of oil on the troubled waters, it should not be withheld. I therefore cheerfully place it at your disposal.

Very truly, your friend and pastor,

C. M. BUTLER.

D. W. MIDDLETON, &c.

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Deut. iv : 8.

“ What nation is there that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law ? ”

There was a time, not long since past, when, by the native and adopted citizens of this country, the praise of its institutions was well-nigh universal. Whatever in their *administration* might be considered wrong, they were regarded as *in themselves* almost perfect. Our admiration of our Government and country was probably overweening. It excited the ridicule of our enemies, and the reprobation of our friends. A few years since, that philosophic and friendly student of our institutions, De Tocqueville, wrote thus: “ If I say to an American that the country he lives in is a fine one, ‘ Aye,’ he replies, ‘ it has not its fellow in the world.’ If I applaud the freedom which it inhabitants enjoy, he answers, “ Freedom is a fine thing, but how few nations are worthy to enjoy it.’ If I remark upon the purity of morals which distinguishes the United States, ‘ I can imagine,’ says he, ‘ that a stranger who has been struck by the corruption of all other nations is astonished at the difference.’ It is impossible to conceive a more troublesome or garrulous patriotism; it wearies those who are disposed to respect it.” If this great thinker were now alive and among us he would be struck with a marked change in this respect. Many persons have lost faith in our republican institutions; many are dissatisfied with them; many consider them a failure; many warm lovers of *regulated*

freedom fear that it is not to be secured by our Constitution, and that only after a reign of anarchy, followed by despotism, will true liberty, in some future century or cycle, at length bless the world. They are not persuaded that this is either "time's noblest empire" or "her last."

One class, looking wholly at the evils of society, at the poverty that prevails in our larger cities, at the greater wealth and higher advantages of the educated classes, pronounce our Government, as at present constituted, an organized outrage on human rights. That society they regard as a failure which does not secure to all men *equal blessings*. Their ideal of a Republic, truly free, is that in which there shall be but *one class*. It is not enough, they think, to constitute a justly regulated state, that there should be equality in law, privilege, and opportunity; but there should be also an absolute equality of condition and of labor. These views come to us from abroad. They originate with those who, under despotism, theorize upon liberty. They are the offspring of disappointment and of suffering. They originate with those who think with their imaginations and their passions. They are rainbow dreams of hope spanning the foaming and turbid torrents of angry wretchedness. The fault they find with our institutions is that they are too *aristocratic*. "Capital oppresses labor. Legislation sanctions the oppression. Wealth and education take advantage of ignorance, poverty, and toil." Such is their conviction. They crave agrarian laws. They aim at the protection of the one only class of which, on their theory, society should consist. It is the party of the "*Mountain*," rising in the midst of our Confederation like the party of that name in the French Republic. Already muttered noises and outbreacking jets of fire admonish us that, as in France, the mountain may become a blazing and destructive volcano.

The dissatisfaction of another class is altogether in the opposite direction. They perceive the downward tendency of our national character. They fear that the Government of the country is becoming the despotism of a single class. They notice with alarm that, practically, the affairs of some muni-

cialties are managed by minorities. They declare that corruption well-nigh universal prevails in politics; that the olden high and enthusiastic passion and principle for freedom has departed; that our civilization is disgraced by piratical forays into friendly States, and by the disgusting polygamy of the Mormons; that mobs shamefully overawe and beat down or corrupt the magistracy of our cities; that violence stalks abroad with the lordly and threatening mien of a conscious master; that law shrinks before the guilt that it should terrify, and that judges are sentenced by the criminals whom they condemn to the vengeance of the secret tribunals of ruffianism, or to proscription from the office which they hold by their suffrage; that life is fearfully unprotected; that gigantic swindling is on the increase; that the sentiment of commercial honor is relaxed; that defalcation and forgery apply to themselves respectable commercial or political phrases, and scarcely suffer even social disrepute. These are the evils which the class to which I now refer regard as *necessarily resulting* from our institutions, and as inevitably destined to overwhelm our freedom.

This sentiment is strengthened in the minds of that now large class of our citizens who have observed in foreign lands the working of more despotic systems. They are struck with seeing in Governments which they have been accustomed to denounce, the security of life and property; the prompt execution of the law; the efficiency of the police; the completeness and solidity of public works; the oversight of corporations; the thoroughness and minuteness of municipal governments; the courtesy of officials connected with postroads and railroads; and the immunity against insult and extortion from agents and runners: and they are charmed with these obvious and ever-present conveniences and advantages. Experiencing the comfort of these arrangements, and contrasting them with the reckless disregard of human life in our own land; with the evasion of the plainest laws in cases of atrocious crime; with the frequent collusions of the police with the criminal; with the slight railroad bridges on tremulous lattice-work over

yawning chasms, which are permitted by stockholding legislators and sanctioned by the verdict, "*No one to blame*;" with the unchecked license of corporate bodies to do and to leave undone; with the corruption and inefficiency of our municipal governments; with the rude insolence of many of the officials connected with our traveling arrangements; with the fear and trembling with which our citizens give themselves up to hackmen and porters — all this experienced contrast between the security and protection on the one hand, and the liability to imposition and insult on the other, has made many persons rush to conclusions larger than the premises warrant, and rest in the conviction that a paternal despotism or a Constitutional Monarchy is in itself better than a Republic.

Happy would it be for us if by these classes and from these causes alone, distrust of the excellence and permanence of our institutions were experienced. But, in addition to these sources of dissatisfaction and apprehension, irritating and mutually alienating political and social questions have of late sadly weakened, in every portion of our land alike, the desire and the hope that our Constitution should be perpetuated, or that this great Republic should continue one.

At a period when such fears and feelings from these various classes are prevalent and increasing, the minister of God, whose work is peace, and whose master is the Prince of Peace, may properly, on this day of national thanksgiving, notice some of the prominent advantages and peculiarities of our republican institutions, in the hope that our loyalty and love to them may be renewed; that our faith in them may be revived; that our gratitude to the Giver of all good may be quickened; that our purposes of fidelity to the high duties of a free Christian citizenship may be confirmed; and that a spirit of fraternal confidence and affection may take the place of jealousy, suspicion, and crimination. Alienated children may sometimes be won back into mutual affection through the common love they bear their mother. If the exasperated sisterhood of States is ever again to be brought into harmony and love, it must be by gathering together, in mutual humility and shame, around the

old family altar, and there uniting, in penitential tears and prayers and vows and offerings. This day, this community thus gathers and thus kneels, thus praises and thus prays, around the altar of our country, in common with twenty-six of the States of this great Union. May their hands be clasped in amity! May their hearts flow together! May their voices, their praises, and their prayers be one! In one humble national confession of past sin, one pleading Litany and supplication for future blessing, one glad "*Te Deum*" and "*Gloria in excelsis*" of praise for present mercies, may the great family of "United States" pour out their hearts to-day!

I have an unshaken conviction that this Republic is the noblest birth of time; that our Constitution is the highest product of political science that the world has seen; that our theories and written charter of Government are almost perfect; that we have more just laws and fewer oppressive privileges than *any* and *all* other nations; that, with all our faults, and our defective refinement and civilization, our social condition is the purest and happiest in the world; that Christianity, as a system, is here placed on its right footing, as free to bless but forbidden to coerce; and that its influence, as a spiritual and moral life, is more penetrating and prevalent than in any other nation; and that individual character is developed here to a stature as lofty, and a proportion as perfect, and a grace as winning as it has ever reached in any period of history, or as it now exhibits in the oldest and most cultivated nations. Believing all this, I may enlarge, with an affectionate enthusiasm, upon our national blessings, and at the same time speak of the dangers which threaten to destroy them.

Our institutions themselves, and our condition under them, furnish abundant matter for devout thanksgiving. We can speak only of prominent *principles* upon which our Republican Government rests, and not of the *provisions* in which they are embodied. They are very trite, and need to be dwelt upon only because we are in danger of forgetting that they are true.

1. If the true end of Government be the greatest happiness,

elevation, and security of the greatest number, then unquestionably the principles upon which our Government is founded, and the provisions of our Constitution in which they are enshrined, are worthy of our enthusiastic loyalty and affection.

The corner-stone of our Republic is *the right and the duty of self-government*. This great principle cannot be puffed out into an empty boast by foolish eulogy. It cannot be sneered into a platitude by the assertion that men are not fit for self-government; for it asserts with the right *the duty*. It results directly from the essential equality of men, as creatures of a common God, with common rights and common duties. It is glorious as a right; it is solemn and self-dignifying as a duty. This immense blessing is fully ours; it is proclaimed in our Declaration of Independence; it is embodied in our constitution; it is secured by our laws. Self-government, through our own agents, chosen by ourselves, representing our will, enacting laws in accordance with our own views of our rights and duties—this is the prerogative of a citizen of this Republic. We have but to think a moment of living in a land where we should have no voice in the government and laws to which we were to be obedient, and where we should be only subjects, and in no degree sovereigns, to perceive what an incalculable blessing is our self-government. Our travelled citizen, who so relishes the security and order of despotic Governments as a visitor or sojourner, perceives, as a resident, that the obverse of the shield, which was, on the one side, "*protection to the stranger*," is "*oppression to the subject*." He learns the difference between being a subject and a citizen. He finds that those Governments do not allow others to take away their rights, mainly that they may do it more effectually themselves. He finds that the flocks are well fed and folded, and guarded by the watch-dogs, that their fleece may be the thicker. Heavy taxes, enforced enlistments, crushing and agonizing wars for personal, imperial ambition; avenues to advancement in fields for which Nature and Providence designed him, closed; the debilitating and belittling effect of being guarded, restrained, and cared for on every side; the mean pride of birth and rank,

and the meaner abjectness which renders to them homage—all this teaches him that if too much and too unregulated liberty has inconveniences which are annoying, despotism has *evils* which are maddening. Then he learns how this right tends to develop manhood, self-respect, and intelligence; how it makes the Government and country, his Government and his country; how it expands his soul with dignifying cares and high responsibilities; how it exalts patriotism into a noble passion, and lifts citizenship into sovereignty, and invests obedience with the grandeur of command. Recreant and low shall we become, if, because of the small and curable evils of our daily social and civil life, we are ever tempted to barter the birthright of self-governing freemen, for the mess of pottage which despotism would insure to us, the privilege of eating in elegant security and peace! If it be true that a nation cannot govern itself as well as it can be governed by a Cæsar, then indeed is it proved that such a nation is unfit for self-government; but it is by no means demonstrated that self-government is not its right and its duty.

2. From this right of self-government it follows that *all citizens have an equal voice in the election of rulers and the making of laws*. It is another question whether and when those not born into the family of the Republic should be adopted as her sons. This great privilege is fully ours. How, in itself, is it adapted to secure for us good rulers and righteous laws! How calculated to have every right and every interest of every section of the country represented and secured! How does this high privilege contrast with the position of those in despotisms who have no voice in the choice of rulers and the enactment of laws; whose welfare in one section may be sacrificed to those of a minister or satrap whose possessions and interests lie in another! Even if by the despotism of a majority he loses, now and then, a single right, it is through the agency of that one great right, without which no rights could be secured.

3. Equality, self-government, the elective franchise—these are inconsistent with *permanent rulers* having life-long, and

transmitting an hereditary, power. In itself considered, how well calculated is such a provision to prevent the Executive from accumulating prerogative and power! How well adapted to lead him to seek the true interests of his country, and an honorable place in its archives! How fitted as a theory to prevent the policy or interest of any one section from becoming predominant or permanent! Thus we see how each successive step, from the first great right of self-government to the choice of rulers and representatives who subside into the mass of equal citizens, seems admirably adapted to secure the great ends of a community of self-governing and equal freemen.

4. It equally follows, from all that we have stated, that there can be *no privileged class*, with titles and prerogatives, which shall, by law, exclude others from its honors and emoluments. In our country there is no such class. May there never be! How much of envy, heart-burning, and low ambition is not this provision calculated to forestall! How much of brotherhood and affection it is calculated to foster! What a free play it gives to affinities of character! What an open path to the career of genius! What delightful facilities for the flow of genial and kindly sympathies and affections! This is an element and condition of the *happiness* of a nation whose importance it is difficult to exaggerate. Man is but half free who enjoys civil, and is robbed of social, equality and rights.

5. It also results from all these principles, that another principle—which is a *duty* more than a privilege—is involved in our republican institutions. If all are equal, and all have equal voices, and no permanent rulers or privileged class may be allowed, in order that these equal privileges may be retained, then it follows that a scheme of government adopted by citizens who retain their privileges, *must be one of mutual compromises and concessions*. The more numerous, diversified and scattered parties to such a government are, the fewer are the points on which they can agree, and the more numerous those on which they must allow a mutual toleration and freedom. The most loving and congenial married couple can live in peace

only when each leaves to the other the free enjoyment of some peculiarity or prerogative. In a family, there must be still more. In the government of villages and towns, still more. In States, still more. In a confederation of States, differing in soil, climate, productions, and local institutions, still more. All this mutual toleration, this freedom of each, with loyalty to all, is beautifully provided for in our systems of municipal, county and State sovereignties, in connection with our General Government. This arrangement is no mere accident. Providence prepared for its possibility. The wise patriotism of our fathers, under His guidance, made it actual. It is the crowning glory of our institutions.

Now, in view of this rapid sketch of the main features and principles of our Government, did I not well to say that our Republic was the noblest birth of time, the last and grandest word of political science ; and that as a theory, adapted to the age, the country and the nation for which it was made, it was well nigh perfect ? I wonder not that it kindled the deep and sober enthusiasm of Washington ; that it commended itself to the calm justice and strong sense of Franklin ; that it set the soul of Jefferson on fire with patriotic zeal ; that it seemed to the great mind of Hamilton, who looked farther than other men into its depths, like the production of some intellect higher than man's ; that to the energetic Jackson it was the embodiment of a battle won for freedom, and to be maintained in the spirit of a soldier and a hero ; that to the knightly spirit of Clay it was the voice of his country, for whose honor he was ever in the lists, and for whom he was ready to pour out his chivalric heart's blood ; and that to the majestic intellect of Webster it was the last and highest lesson of the genius of legislation. It was worthy of the admiration of these great minds, and the homage of these high hearts. It has in past times vindicated its title to the admiration of the world. We do well to admire and praise our institutions. They are wisely constructed to conserve freedom and to maintain law.

II. Our condition under these institutions has been, and in many respects still is, such as should fill our hearts with gratitude and our tongues with praise. It is marked by some peculiarities which make it more favored than that of any other nation. Not only is there no class privileged by law, but there is no caste hedged in by custom with social privileges unattainable by others. All that is best and highest in literature and society is accessible to the worthy and the capable. This is a more advanced state of society, viewed in reference to justice and benevolence, even if it be less favorable to high refinement in a narrow sphere, than that society which excludes multitudes, qualified, by all but technical distinctions, alike to enjoy it and to adorn. Add to this the general opportunities for education, the intelligence that already does, and the greater intelligence that may distinguish the laboring and mechanic classes; the diffusion of literature; the multiplication of lyceums, reading-rooms, and lectures; the facilities for travel, the progress of the arts, the bountifulness of the soil, the diffusion of plenty, the avenues open to enterprise, the rewards lavished upon ingenuity, the inevitable success of industry, the moral purity of social life, the high and honored position of woman, the freedom of religion, the character of its ministers; the variety, the activity, the ever new sources of enjoyment and interest thrown open to our eager population; the diversities of our national character, each checking, modifying, and improving the other—group all these advantages of our condition as a nation, and it will be found, that, however dainty travelers may croak, and agrarian levelers may howl, we have, in our institutions, and our actual condition under them, advantages and excellences which have never been equaled in the history of the world. Whatever may be our causes for humiliation and alarm, we still have these advantages as reasons for gratitude and thanksgiving to the God of Nations.

III. Will they endure? Shall we have them much longer? Can they be maintained against the thick-coming influences for evil which make them at this moment totter? These are fearful questions: they are asked in sad earnest by our wisest men.

Many fear ; a few hope ; some despair ; all believe that there must speedily be either ruin or reformation.

Excellent as our institutions are, there are certain conditions upon which alone they can endure.

1. There must be, first of all, *a preponderating public virtue*. Ours is *self-government*. That which enables an individual to govern himself and makes him just to others—which is moral and religious principle—is indispensable to the self-government of an united people. Without this condition our Government could not have been inaugurated.

“The sensual and the dark rebel in vain—

Slaves by their own compulsion ;

They burst their manacles and wear the *name*

Of Freedom graven on a heavier chain.”

Now, if the governing power, the majority, ceases to be *self-governing* ; if it be guided in public and private life by unjust and selfish motives ; if it be ready to trample on conscience and on right for personal ends, our free institutions cannot be maintained. However their forms may for a time survive, their life is gone.

2. It is another obvious condition of their perpetuity that the virtuous majority, which possesses the self-governing power, *should exert it*. In our Government citizenship, unused by those who possess it, is a talent buried, and becomes a crime. If the power to elect righteous rulers and representatives, charged to enact and execute just laws, be possessed by a majority which will not use it, but which will allow a minority, who are not *self-governing* in private life, and therefore much less can be so in public life, to rule a State, then are they who possess this unused power themselves guilty of electing an unrighteous magistracy. If from apathy, or fear, or self-interest, those who might constitute the governing power of the Republic *on just principles*, *will not* do so, it must become another government or end in anarchy, whatever may be its name.

3. It is another equally evident condition, on which alone our Government can be sustained, that rulers, the agents of the self-governing community, should carry out its behests.

If they can systematically evade the execution of the law, the embodiment of the people's will, it is again evident that our free self-government cannot subsist.

4. Nor is it less apparent that the concessions which parties to a national compact, for the sake of that compact, have mutually, even if reluctantly made, must be sacredly maintained, if a government of confederated and self-governing States is to endure. If the parties to such concessions and compromises have not sufficient self-control and honor to abide by their mutual engagements, a breaking up of the whole system must ensue. "All Nature's difference is Nature's peace." The peace of nature is the equilibrium of multiplied opposing forces. Withdraw one or more, and the balanced forces rush from rest into mutually destructive violence. In our confederated Union the balanced differences must constitute its peace. If the balance be destroyed, if the solemn compacts of our National Confederation are violated, in the letter or the spirit, the peace departs.

Such, then, are some of the indispensable conditions on which our institutions are entitled to the praise, and become the instruments of the blessings which we have ascribed to them. If the majority of our citizens cease to be swayed by moral and just principles, or, if so swayed, they fail to exercise their citizenship, so that the Government is not theirs; if a minority of evil men control our elections and legislation, and execute or fail to execute our laws, then our system, so admirable when worked according to its design, becomes one of the most potent agencies for oppressing and degrading a nation which the ingenuity of man ever devised.

IV. Now, the solemn questions put to us by the times are these: Are these conditions ours? Can they be maintained?

1. Are we a self-governing people? Are the majorities of our land virtuous and just? Would their expressed will enforce law and right? Look at the aspect of society during the last five years. Commercial, civil and social convulsions have within that period torn off the seemly coverings from the national character, and have disclosed its festering and guilty

sores. Frightful dishonesty in the highest commercial circles has been exhibited. An unsuspected amount of sinful folly, dissipation, and impurity in social life has been unveiled. The depositaries of public trusts—even those of religious corporations, and themselves bearing Christian names—have been guilty of such monstrous frauds that the startled community has asked in bewilderment and fear, “In whom *can* we confide?” In political life—why should I speak of it!—each party charges all other parties with the corruption which it is to be feared itself exhibits. All over the land robbery, ruffianism, murders, and deadly personal encounters are frightfully on the increase. These are the grounds on which the higher organs of public opinion in Europe are proclaiming that society is falling to pieces in the United States. De Tocqueville’s commendations of our institutions are no longer accepted, and his prophetic fears of the dangers that beset them are believed to be already realized. A journal so liberal as the *Edinburgh Review* proclaims that our civilization is degenerating; that our civil authorities are impotent to repress the combined and resolute disobedience of the mobs; that the lowest and most vicious class rule; and that this only has a real representation because it is in the ascendant in the State; that the vast mass of quiet and industrious citizens tremble under a despotism which they cannot overthrow, and dare not enrage. Are these things so? Is there any considerable truth in this representation? Is it so that we are not a self-governed, but a *self-loosed* or an *other-governed* people? These are fearful questions. They must soon be answered. The remark of Hampden to Hyde may be applicable to us, “Things must be worse before they can be better.” It may be that nothing less than anarchy can rouse our citizens to a sense of the dangers that beset our national life.

2. And again, we ask, Are the other conditions of the perpetuity of our institutions found among us? Has the virtuous citizenship of the land its just influence and authority? Nay, many of our best private citizens most neglect their duties to

the State. They allow themselves to be absorbed in private interests and enjoyments. While they have slept, evil men have sowed tares in the field. They have little influence in affairs. What they at first neglected through indifference, they now shrink from in distaste or start back from in terror. If they will not speak, and act, and guard their civil treasures with manliness and vigilance, they may be sure that they will be stolen or destroyed.

3. But still more emphatically may we ask, "Can we secure the execution of our laws?" Ah! here is our great difficulty; here is the point which indicates our great danger. Our laws, national, State, and municipal, are for the most part wise and just, if they were put in execution. Crime increases, and is rampant, and defies and terrifies us because it so often escapes punishment. Gigantic swindlers laugh at unexecuted laws. Ruffianism does not even care to hide the hilt of the knife in its pocket, for its threatening exhibition secures impunity in its use. Hence is explained the paradoxical fact that, in despotic nations, where there is less real virtue, there is also less manifested and flagrant crime. It is there repressed. There is a guard over it that it shall not be easily perpetrated. There is a quick and sharp punishment to fall upon it when it is. Here is one of our greatest national wants. If it be not soon supplied, the scenes of the French Revolution, without their excuse, will soon be renewed. We must have done with the sickly sentiment that would abolish capital punishment. Juries must be just and fearless, and remember that mercy to wanton criminals is cruelty to the innocent. Judges must execute justice in the fear of God. What we want is manliness, decision, energy, courage; a prompt assertion of our privileges; an inflexible execution of our laws; a vigilant eye and a strong hand to prevent crime; and a sharp, prompt, and terrifying execution of just punishment when crime is proved. We are becoming *scared* by bad men, who know and take advantage of our alarm.

4. And again, and most emphatically of all, we may ask, if the mutual tolerance, concessions, and compromises of the

various portions of our Confederacy are, and can continue to be, maintained? Alas! how sad is the aspect, and how evil the augury of the present times! What angry crimination and recrimination of citizen and citizen, State and State, section and section! We are passing through a fearful crisis in our national affairs. Our National Legislature is about to meet with excited and bitter feelings. Oh, brethren, let your earnest prayer ascend every morning and every night that the Prince of Peace may lay an arrest on the angry passions of the hour! It remains to be seen whether the suggestions of anger, suspicion, and hatred shall prevail to increase our danger; or whether our sense of danger shall give rise to councils of forbearance, fraternal confidence, and peace. As our thanksgiving this day, for past and present mercies, should be more fervent, in view of our fear for the future, so should our prayer be the more importunate that these threatening evils may not come, in view of the great blessings which have signalized our past history, and which are with us in large measure still. From this point of view, happy in the possession of the law of the Constitution which makes the great States of our country one mighty Republic, and fearful that it should be destroyed, we throw an impassioned earnestness of admiration and affection into the question of the text, "What nation is there that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?"

I have shown you how worthy are our institutions of our loyalty and love; the dangers that beset them; the conditions on which alone they can be perpetuated. And now, in conclusion, I am free to say that I have hope for the perpetuity of our institutions, as they came to us from our fathers, only in such a prevalence of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ as shall enable the governing majorities of the land to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. Only in that spiritual life of the Gospel, which puts into the morality of the Gospel a power to make it real in times that stir men's passions into rashness, can I find any hope or guarantee for the high style of Christian citizenship demanded at a crisis when

justice, self-control, forbearance, and willingness even to bear temporary wrongs for the sake of enduring blessings, are demanded. And because the word of God has of late had such free course and been so glorified, though I cannot cast away the suggestion of fear, I dare still to hope. When I go to search for auguries of hope, I will not ask to be admitted to caucus, and Cabinet, and Congress. I will enter the closet of prayer; I will sit down in the Church of God; I will listen to the teachings of the Sunday school; I will wend my way to those unions of prayer, where brothers and sisters, from far Maine and Georgia and California, find themselves bound in eternal ties, which man nor devil may rend asunder. If I find, while man is snapping, one by one, the ties of human interest, affection, and political advantage which bind together the citizens of this great Republic, that God's Holy Spirit is at the same time weaving and tightening around them the invisible and mighty spiritual threads of a Christian union and affection, I still will hope. In this wide-spread Christian life I can confidently look for a purity, a courage, a principle, a forbearance, a love, a faith in God's great purposes to the world through the Union of these States, equal to the emergency.

To the Church of God, then—and I use the word in the large sense which includes all that private and public virtue, whose life is a true spiritual religion, which takes hold of eternal power, and wields it for the world—to the Church in this large sense, I believe that, as at first was committed the work of calling into being and fashioning this Republic, so now is committed the responsibility of this great moral and political crisis of our history. If she cannot save her, she can go down with her in the exercise of all her best energies and her holiest consecration. When the steamship *Central America* had vainly struggled with the waves, and when it was evident she must go down, her noble and pious commander went to his cabin and put on his official costume, and placed himself on the wheel-house, and fired the last signal gun; and when the ship began to sink he stood erect and calm, and reverently uncovered his head, as if acknowledging the presence and submit-

ting himself to the will of God; and then, with his arm extended to heaven, gave himself a cheerful sacrifice to his duty and his God. So, should the ship of State go down, may the Church be found at her post, reverently acknowledging the awful presence and humbly submitting to the righteous judgments of Jehovah !

But, thanks be to God, the ship of State is still afloat ! The storms have beat it, but they have not broken. It rolls and pitches, but it is not sinking.

“Sail on, oh, ship of State !

Sail on, Oh, UNION, strong and great !

Humanity, with all its fears,

With all its hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate ;

We know what master laid thy keel,

What workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,

Who made each mast, and sail and rope,

What anvils rang, what hammers beat,

In what a forge and what a heat

Were shaped the anchors of thy hope !

Fear not each sudden sound and shock,

’Tis of the wave and not the rock ;

’Tis but the *flapping* of the sail,

And not a *rent* made by the gale.

In spite of rock and tempest’s roar,

In spite of false lights on the shore,

Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea :

Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee.

Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,

Our faith, triumphant o’er our fears,

Are all with thee, are all with thee.”

My Christian brethren and friends, this day finds you in the possession of signal personal blessings. As you enumerate them, forget not to place among them the sorrows that you have been called upon to suffer ; and for all your mercies take the cup of thanksgiving and sing praises unto God. As yet the evils which we have depicted have scarcely thrown a shadow over the sweet and guarded home-life of the Christian citizen of this favored land. You will sit down to-day to cheerful and temperate family feasts, crowned with matchless mer-

cies. Blessed memories of the past will cluster around the eucharistic board. Dear forms and faces, softened by time into tenderest beauty, and transfigured by the Christian hope with which they departed into angelic purity, will make you feel that blessed memories, brightened by more blessed hopes, are better even than our imperfect human fruitions. For mercies, then, past and present, for sorrows no less than joys, but above all, for the hope that is full of immortality, and the faith that makes salvation present, let us, to-day, offer to God united and devout "Thanksgiving."

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